



SOPP 57,450.4



OLD MATHEWS.

THE
L I F E
OF
SAMUEL MATTHEWS;
THE
NORWOOD HERMIT.

BEING
Curious Particulars of his Misfortunes, & strange Propensity,
THE MANNER OF HIS LIVING,
AND
ANECDOTES
EXEMPLARY OF HIS CHARACTER,
LIKEWISE,
THE AUTHENTIC ACCOUNT
OF THE
TRAGICAL TERMINATION
OF HIS EXISTENCE.

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TO THE READER.



TO trace the various paths of life which men pursue, is a task, to do it with that strictness which should ever be its bias, of as great difficulty as any species of writing whatever; for a deviation of even confounds the trait, and, if the person depicted should be known, brings a just doubt of what may remain unknown: besides, Memoirs in general are copies of life, wherein, if the subject should be in the favor of fortune, the like road is pointed out wherein any may tread, to enable them to be found worthy of the like Favors; but if fortune should have frowned on them, the rocks they fell on are exposed for the reader to shun.

Thus the lives of either the fortunate or unfortunate are mirrors, the most perfect to guide the inexperienced youth to the road of that happiness, which we may reasonably hope to attain in the transient enjoyments of this sublunary state.

But, notwithstanding the great utility which arises from biography, we cannot answer that much may be gleaned from the life of such a person as Matthews was, except displaying him as a character, nature designed to perfect her wise ends, and shew the fallacy of temporary riches to the general advantage of real happiness; that he was happy in his situation, is undoubted, as the following pages will convince, but who else could be so in such a place is impossible to say,—thus he proves that there are situations, and circumstances, in every part of life, that may accord with the desires of one man, under which another may sink instantly; fully answering that old adage, “The burden is generally suited to the back.”

THE
L I F E
OF
SAMUEL MATTHEWS, &c.

TO gratify the wishes of the public, we have, with the utmost perseverance, procured the following particulars of that unfortunate, but peculiarly eccentric, old man, Samuel Matthews, the *Norwood* Hermit.

He was by birth a Welchman, and came to England in the year 1772, or near about that time, and rented a large spot of ground as a gardener, at *Kentish Town*.

Here he lived a happy domestic life, being blessed with four children, two girls and two boys: his manners were extremely affable, but like Welchmen in general, his choler was soon rised, and, with the slightest submission, as soon appessed; he had long gained the respect of his neighbours, and his circumstances began to bid fair for a full gratification to all his cares; but man, alas, is often happy to day, and to-morrow is reduced to the most distressing condition, thus it happened to him.

One morning he said to his wife, "Sally, my dear, I am afraid we shall have a great deal of trouble, for I have had a very strange dream last night," she said to him, "never mind dreams, they are nonsense," he answered again, "I hope so, I hope we shall find it so," but seemed to be very much concerned about it,---his wife endeavored to dispel that idea that so strongly affected him, as he was become quite melancholly, but it was in vain, for he gave himself up totally to its fatal influence.

Fate seemed to have acted greatly in this prepossession, for in the course of a day or two he was taken very ill, and a violent fever attacked him, he remained in this state sometime, until it reached his brain, and he was deprived of his mental faculties.

His unfortunate wife finding the effects of the fever to remain on his understanding, after that had sometime abated, caused him to be conveyed to a madhouse, as the best and most probable way for his cure; here he underwent the common process, his wife attending him as long as she could, until she fell ill, having caught the fever, which terminated her existence.

He was now left to the charge of his keepers, for being far distant from his relations, he could not have that assistance which they could have communicated, had they been near him, and as for his children they were too young to be any assistance to him; but fortunately they found friends of their father's, who kindly protected them.

About two years after, being greatly relieved from his fatal disorder, the thoughts of his family now occupied his imagination, and watching the opportunity, escaped from his keepers, and once more visited his late habitation, but found all totally reduced.

Before his misfortunes, he constantly kept three or four men, which, together with his own, and the little aid which his wife contributed, placed his piece of land in a prosperous condition, and prevented any uneasy reflections, which, of

course, now oppressed him, to see the wreck of his late possession: unable any longer to remain here, he obtained four shillings from some friend, and with that small sum set off for his native place, called *Long Shipping*, being near two hundred miles. On his journey he met a man, who he said, was poorer than himself, accordingly gave him something to eat and drink, (for if he saw a person more in want than himself, if he had but a penny he would either divide it, or give it all to them) he then left him and went on.

In this journey he first laid unhoused, for he constantly walked till tired, or night overtook him, and then he laid under a hay-stack, or by the side of a hedge, or any other place that chance afforded, till day-break, and then again went forward.

At length he reached his journey's end, and, at his arrival, such was his frugality and perseverance, that he then had remaining eighteen-pence of the four shillings that he set out with. He found himself a little relieved by the presence of his relations, but biassed by the influence of his fate, he once more returned to *London*, but instead of going again to his old residence, went to *Sydenham Common*.

This was about the time of a very heavy fall of snow, which notwithstanding, he always pulled off his clothes, and laying on a piece of coarse stuff, covered himself over with his own clothes, and thus he made a practice of sleeping. In this situation he was several times found by different people.

Such a person, as he appeared to be to the inhabitants at that time, (for he was unknown about there) caused suspicions, greatly to his discredit, which though he no ways deserved, they were justifiable in having, and through which they had him taken up as a vagabond, and carried to *Greenwich*, from whence he was passed to *Kentish Town*.

He was not long before he found his way back to the neighbourhood of *Sydenham*, but being aware of the danger he would be in if he went directly there, took up his residence in *Norwood*; and, fearful of what he had before experienced, shunned the company of any that came within sight, and if, by chance, they nearly approached, he would instantly glide in the thickest of the wood, and be lost from their sight.

Thus he was perfectly recluse in the wood, and being but seldom seen was scarcely known per-

sonally, or even by name, though he visited different places for the purpose of procuring himself victuals.

A person of such a peculiar mode of living could not remain for ever without being discovered, especially near such a place as London; consequently he was first found asleep, and being awakened gradually, received the company of some in that neighbourhood, though it was nearly three years before he could accommodate himself to the constant visits of those most familiar to him; but finding no danger attending their visitings, his apprehensions wore off, and he began to be compassionated, and felt the generosity of those who pitied him.

Being a little more familiar with the inhabitants of *Sydenham* and *Dulwich*, he began to get a little relief, by cutting sticks for different purposes, for hitherto he had been greatly constrained, though one of his daughters, the only one capable of rendering any useful assistance to her father in his situation, contributed as far as in her power to his relief.

The warden of *Dulwich College*, (a very humane gentleman) went one day to him, and asked him how he dared to sell his wood, he replied, "I don't know it's your wood," the gentleman

answered, "well then, I tell you it is my wood,"
 "don't know, b—g—d but what it is my wood,"
 he said again, to which the gentleman again
 poke, "I tell you then it is my wood," he re-
 plied, "I don't care, b—g—d, I don't care,
 not I,"—"Well then," said the gentleman, "if
 you come along with me I will send you to sea,"
 he said again, "I don't care where you send me,
 don't care where you send me, not I," then
 he came along with me, answered the gentleman;
 he followed, and they both proceeded to where
 the men, who was in the employment of the
 gentleman, were regaling themselves, it being an
 annual feast, given by their master.

When they came, Matthews, quite uncon-
 cerned, joined in their festival, and, after enjoy-
 ing himself for some time, returned to his habi-
 tation, with great hilarity.

Here he lived a perfect recluse, free from the
 noise and bustle that ever prevails in the busy
 scenes of life, and the vanity that so strongly
 predominates; he was content with his dwelling;
 no shelves decorated, with costly magnificence,
 or rooms adorned with sumptuous furniture, he
 had to gratify him, but all was unaffected na-
 ture, he needed no excitements to raise his appe-
 tite, for his utmost wishes were solitude and a
 sufficiency.

He endeavored to gain that sufficiency by attending the gardens of the different gentlemen about his neighbourhood, with such steady perseverance as quite conciliated their esteem. He had, as may be observed, a peculiar wildness in his discourse, and being possessed of unimpeachable integrity, his company was never shunned, even by the gentry that employed him.

The misfortune he had experienced wrought the idea strongly, that he should be starved to death; but the liberal encouragement he met from those gentlemen who employed him, dispelled those fears, and greatly consoled him for his former apprehension, previous to which, the operations of his thoughts so strangely affected him, that he was often discovered in tears.

A person having once found him in that disconsolate mood, asked him if he was not well, he answered in his well-known manner, "I don't know, I don't know," and seemed very much embarrassed in his answer;—the person, who was a particular friend, again said to him, "Why Master Matthews, I think something must be the matter with you, you look very poorly indeed," or words similar, but poor Matthews shook his head, and said, "No, no, something, something, I can't tell," then he walked about with one hand in his bosom and the other in his

coat pocket, with hasty and disordered steps, and his eyes bent on the ground : his friend then pressed him to tell what was the matter, and, after several fruitless endeavors to evade giving a direct answer, he said, " Ah, I can't help it, I can't help it, I think I shall be starved, heough," and then the water stood in his eyes again ; this person then gave him half-a-crown, at which Matthews said, with great affection, " God bless you, God bless you, thank'e, thank'e," and seemed greatly relieved by it.

Besides his usual daily exertions, he gained a very comfortable income by disposing of small beer to the numerous visitors that came to see him ; for as his manner of living, and' his talk being so extraordinary, he became of great notoriety in *London* and *Westminster*, and many other places ; that he had, in the course of a few years, innumerable visitors to see him, numbers of them became constant in their visits to *Matthews the hairy man*.

He was remarkably addicted in talking to himself, and would discourse with those people, whose curiosities led them to ask him, of the various circumstances he met with during his lonesome stay in such a dreary wood, " I don' know, I don' know, strange things, strange things, some-

times," he would answer, and at the same time keep walking about.

He used to dress his victuals generally after the manner of the gypsies, by having three sticks fastened at the top, and a kettle, or whatever he then chanced to have at the time, suspended from it, and then he would sometimes sit, seemingly with his eyes nearly shut.

His goodnature was unbounded, and his affability, in his peculiar wildness, was very great, and as to the power of avarice, he had the natural feelings of a man in a too extensive degree for that to form any part of his disposition; for although he gained himself an ample sufficiency, (as little in his manner of living was required) by his daily exertions, it was not with a view of accumulating hoards that he sold those trifling articles which he so long had vended; on the contrary, what he had his visitors were welcome to, and he brought forth what he chanced to have in his little cave, with the greatest willingness, and those who could pay, he accepted it of, and those who could not, (if they called again) there was no reluctance shewn, he was still *Matthews the generous*, which appellation he long and justly had merited, for his generosities he never made a parade of, a beggar was as welcome though he paid nothing, as a gentleman who had well-replenished pockets.

There was one thing very curious, which shewed his readiness at expedients, if a person wanted a bottle of beer, he went to his secret deposits, and, without any trouble, got what was wanted, though, but a very little time before, those who called for it had been at that identical place to search (out of curiosity) for those articles which he had there placed, but notwithstanding their strictest endeavors, their search was in vain, and afterwards some would tell him what they had done, at which he sometimes smiled, and said, "Ah, very bad, very bad, I aint robbed much though."

He always returned at night to his cave to sleep, after his day's work was ended, until a circumstance, which will be mentioned in its proper place, occasioned him to recede from it, though very much to his disinclination. As his excavated residence, would only just contain him, he, when within, closed up the entrance with a large bush, to secure himself from the innovation of disagreeable intruders, and which, for a long while, fully answered his intentions.

His honesty was particularly scrupulous, for at one time, before he became so well known, he was reduced to the utmost extremity, and would not endeavor to contract the least debt, though

so situated. At that time, sitting by the side of his solitary habitation, he was accosted by a friend who visited him several times before, and seeing him in such a pensive attitude, asked him what was the matter, but poor Matthews could not answer him, he repeated his question, at which he shook his head, and putting his hand on his breast, pointed with the other to the ground, and again shook his head: thinking what was the matter with him, as he had two or three times before been in a similar condition, he asked him what he had got to eat, at which, unable any longer to restrain himself, he bursted into tears, and cried like a child;—this was very affecting to his friend, who was confident that his distress was owing to his principle, as not having a direct prospect of discharging the account for what he might procure, and what his nature actually wanted, he would have sunk beneath his wants, and never have made known his griefs to any one.

It may, perhaps, be a subject of surprize to many, that his family did not endeavor to cause him to leave a place, where he was exposed to such innumerable inconveniencies, which they must have been aware of, and likewise in his distress, or, if not in their own power to relieve him, to interest themselves, so far as to signify his misfortunes to some of the inhabitants in his

neighbourhood, that by so doing, he might, by their goodness, be assisted in those or like extreties, but they were as ignorant of the real state of his finesse as almost the greatest stranger; for whenever they went to see him, he seemed to strain his exertions to hide the misery of his situation from their knowledge, fearing they would endeavor to urge him to abandon his much-loved retreat, which, though it would have been a thing quite impossible, as will be hereafter seen, might have caused them great uneasiness and inconvenience, by a constant apprehension, and that attendance upon him, as their fears would have made necessary to their repose.

This friend, who had discovered him in this serious condition, finding he was greatly enervated by his late want, went directly and procured something for his immediate relief, and returning found him laying on the ground, he requested him to sit up and eat, but he fully answered, "Ah, ah! no, no, no, I know, I know," with a very disordered accent, which amply exemplified his ditrest state; after a little time he sat up and began eating, his friend to encourage him, eat also, and kept talking in the most familiar manner to him, and said, "Eat away, you shall treat me next week, my wife and I shall come and dine with you," "so do, so do, I shall have summut then," he replied, and seemed greatly cheered by the promise. C 3

In the summer his visitors were many, but in the winter they were more contracted, though most welcome, for, as their curiosity prompted them to visit him, the greatest part commiserated his unhappy derangement, and liberally bestowed their gift with humane sympathy ; by which he was afterwards enabled to be conducive to the relief of the sufferings of his fellow creatures, who would often strole to see him.

As characteristic of his manners and disposition, the following anecdote is mentioned, which took place a few years ago : Some friends from London went to see him, it was in the spring of the year, when they reached his patriarchal habitation, he was alone, walking about as usual, they accosted him in the familiar way of, " Well father, how are you ? " he answered, " very well, very well, sit down, sit down," they complied with him, and sitting down, asked him ' what news, " Don' know, don' know, nothing from London, eh,"—they answered, " Nothing as they had heard of," eh, eh, never mind, never mind, hear sunnut by and by, stars fight, stars fight, I see 'em ; they then asked him when he saw them, " Last night, last night, moon and all, war, war ; but how far he could prophecy cannot be said, as the time is not now remembered, nor should we endeavor to advance that he ever had been gifted with the spirit of prophecy, as it

never was known he aimed at that gift, except in trifling matters.

After a little more discourse, they asked him if he had any thing to eat, to which he answered, "Yes, yes, I'll find sum'mut," then went to his little cave and brought a very nice piece of boiled mutton and bread out, on a plate, which though not very inviting to the appetite, was sufficiently expressive of the goodness of his disposition, then sitting down, began to eat with them, having first got a bottle of his beer.

It was a practice he had used himself to, to cut all the superfluous branches that grew out, to the obstruction of the passengers, in the different paths in the wood, and making them fit for bundles, disposed of them for a trifle to his various customers.

One day being very busy at this work, a gentleman of the College, went to him, jocosely, and with great seeming seriousness, asked him what business he had to to lop those branches, he answered, "a d—mn'd good job, master, a d—mn'd good job," and notwithstanding all the interrogation which the gentleman made, he would make no other reply, than as before, "a d—mn'd good job, master, a d—mn'd good job," to which answers he smiled to himself, and left him to his employment. Of this circum-

stance he boasted a little, apparently much pleased at his success ; as it rather signified a privilege granted him.

At the prediction of the weather he was remarkably sagacious, insomuch as it became quite common for many people to say, after they had been to see him, that, “ the day will be fine, for Matthews, said so,” or, that “ the day would be bad for Matthews, said so,” he was deemed a never-failing thermometer, a certain oracle for the decision of the weather ; nor need we wonder much at it, as according to the various opinions handed down to us, and even in scripture, and what we ourselves may observe that the weather is greatly actuated by the planets, which transmits sufficient appearances to those who devote sufficient study to gain the knowledge, whereby they may almost infallibly prognosticate the weather for a few approaching hours.

We come now to relate a circumstance which caused our poor Hermit to abandon his excavated dwelling for a considerable time, and which was as great a misfortune then to him, as almost any one thing in his life.

About five or six years ago, two women assaulted him at his habitation, and greatly ill used him, and then robbed him of about twelve shillings.

This robbery occasioned him a deal of anxiety and uneasiness, insomuch as he totally left his dear abode of quiet and contentment, and for about a year and half after had no place of fixed residence, but lodged in uncertain places to elude any further attempts, if possible, on him, for he apprehended they might again endeavor to rob him, and on failure of their wishes, use greater violence than before, for although there were but two women who robbed him, he always thought more were in colleague with them.

But for his better security, as before observed, he left the place entirely, and not, until an expiration of a year and half, after, he ventured to live once more in his secluded dwelling.

Led by some secret impulse he enthusiastically embraced his old mode of living, but for his safety, he made considerable alterations in his little hermitage, for before this last misfortune, his cave was, in a manner, open at the mouth, as he never had any further security, than what a large bush, pulled to the entrance after him, afforded. But now he banked it up with clods of earth, turfs, fir, underwood, and several other things which he deemed necessary to the future security of similar encroachments, and to prevent their sudden innovations on him, he, instead of the bush, placed a board, so contrived, that by

pressing his feet against it after he had laid down, none could hurt him without giving him sufficient alarm.

He now, once more, gave into the freedom of his lonely home, and unenvying and unenvied; watched the stars at night, and told to the visitors of his solitary habitation, what he had seen, and the effects he conceived resulting from their combination. With several who constantly paid him their visits, he, by the fancies he communicated, obtained the appellation of the unambitious astronomer, for a gentleman, who used to take great pleasure in his wild way of talking, and who had been one, among the best of his benefactors, offered him the use of a telescope for two or three nights, merely to hear the result of his observations, as he was too well convinced his talk of those things were the effects of a failure in his understanding; but he declined it, saying at the same time, "I've got good eyes, got good eyes, I can see very well, b—g—d," which expression, though it caused him to smile, raised his compassion for the poor old man.

There is one thing to be observed, that it was not at his first advancement to public notice, that he vended small beer and bread and cheese, and such like articles, but several years had passed, when the thought being given him, he

embraced it, not with any avaricious motive to get what he did not want, but to have it more in his power to contribute to the wants of several, who he had given temporary relief to; notwithstanding such was his intention, and though his mode of secreting his different commodities, was so very great, he was so much robbed that he gained the opportunity of assisting the necessitous very trifling more than he had, by the munificence of others, before enjoyed; but as it tallied with his wishes, notwithstanding the disadvantages it was attended with, he kept it on till the time of his death.

Respecting his principles in religious concerns, we cannot say that he was strictly conformable to the prescribed rules of the church or of any particular sect, but if honesty, uprightness, and a firm adherence to that important and equitable rule "of doing as we would wish to be done by," will insure a passport to heaven, we can with the greatest pleasure say, that such was his eagerness to do so, that he has often left himself destitute of a penny, and at the same time, been deficient of the requisites to the fulfilment of his natural wants; and for his not being more concerned for the advantage of his immortality, it can be a little accounted for by the melancholy subversion of his intellectual faculties which affected him to that height, that very often his

discourse was incoherent and sometimes quite unintelligible.

Such a man, secluded from the pleasures and advantage of general society, immured in a lonesome wood, exposed to the various seasons in all their inclemencies and disadvantages, and subjected to the insults and assaults of ignorant and merciless wretches, that such a man, under such circumstances should be happy, it may appear impossible to many, but let them consider the situation of numbers only in this metropolis, and they'll find some far happier than many who now fills the most exalted stations; that alone, without doubt, will be sufficient to confirm the validity of his being happy in his lone situation, but if not, let them consider the natural habits of the body and mind, with what facility they fall in with every state they can be placed in, and consider the number of years in which he had been there, both his body and mind must have been long habituated to his mode of living, and very little could have happened to him that could have disturbed the tranquilities he enjoyed except the assaults of such wretches as those who caused his miserable exit.

Now confident of the power of discharging any trifling debt which he might contract, he was emboldened to solicit such assistance without that

fear that before so much oppressed him, and which had so nearly proved fatal to him, inso-much that he had various articles at several places, where nothing was required but his word for their security, for he was never, or but very scarcely, known, and then caused by the most urgent occasions, to fail in his punctuality.

One of his houses of credit was the FRENCH HORN at *Dulwich*, and another Mrs. Bagshaw's, the WELLS, on *Sydenham* Common, well known for the efficacy of its waters, they having a paper of its virtues left for inspection.

That he was ingenious, the manner of his living, and the different construction of his cave evinces, for from being only a protection for him from the weather, he made it a protector from common encroachments, though not from cruel assassinations.

His simplicity engrossed the attention of many, and the epithet of the Wild Man of the Woods, carried a sound exciting the curiosity of thousands; his inoffensive behavior caught their wonderment, for the phrase of a wild man carried with it the idea of a man unacquainted with the social duties annexed to his nature; therefore, when they found that he was possessed

of the humanity and cordiality of the rest of mankind, they became astonished, and frequented his habitation to enjoy the wild, but agrèeable, discourse of poor Matthews.

The greatest luxury which he was known in general to enjoy, was a pipe and a full pot of beer, (for he never called for less) that constituted his chief debauchery, and after drinking it, though he might feel a little the effects thereof, he returned to his endeared retreat of silence and solitude.

He, as it may be easy conceived from his secluded mode of living, had long foregone the social enjoyment of reciprocal friendship, and that he could not accord himself to that diffusing pleasure which flows from company, for the power of his misfortunes attacking his brain, already enervated by the dreadful effects of the fever, consumed the seeds of that sociality, and plunged him into a state of despondency, which first urged him to seek such a dreary habitation.

As the force of his malady subsided, time habituated him to his lonesome abode, and thus left to the enjoyment of his reflections, he, retrospectively viewed the various occurrences of his past days, with chearful resignation, for the situation he enjoyed transfused that serenity

to his desires, which consoled him for his misfortunes, and he beheld the decline of his days unalloyed with conscientious pangs.

The following circumstance seemed to affect him very much, for he mentioned it several times to two or three of his friends, and constant visitors, with extreme fervency.

Passing through the vicinity of his abode, he met a woman and child, the latter sucking, and accosted her in a friendly manner, with, "How do, how do," but her not answering, he again spoke to her, at which she looked up, and he saw her crying, his heart, susceptible to the soft emotions of humanity, felt for the distress which apparently affected her, he asked her "What's the matter, can I help you, can I, a?" she then said to him, that her husband was dead, and being destitute of friends, she had lost her home, and knew not what to do, unfortunately he had nothing about him to assist her with, therefore told her to stop awhile and he would give her something to help her, then hastened to his dwelling, but when he returned she was gone, which hurt him very much, not having any thing whereby he might have aided her forlorn situation.

Another time he was going to assist at a gentleman's garden, and in his way he found sixpence and three halfpence; he put it in his pocket, but had not proceeded far before he saw two children who seemed in great want, he pitied and relieved them, for he gave his luck, as he said, to them, and bid them to follow him; they did so, and he took them to his cave, and there liberally treated them with the fare his habitation afforded, and then took them to the direct road that leads to *Dulwich*, that being the place they wanted to go to.

Those were circumstances that made his soul rejoice, for it constituted the greatest joy of his life to contribute in any manner to the welfare of his fellow creatures.

Although his disposition was so generous, he could never accommodate himself to the friendly intimacy of the laboring people with whom he performed his usual occupation, but his mind burned for solitude, and he fled oftentimes with transport to his fancy-wrought cave, after having been in a manner forced to their company.

The time that he had abandoned his cave through the cruel treatment he had experienced, was the most uncomfortable of any he had experienced since his first residence at *Sydenham* and *Norwood*; for while away he used to say to

some of his old and regular visitors, that he did not know what to do, for he was afraid to go to his cave for fear of being robbed again, "but if I am I can't lose much," he said, "for I never keep much by me, but I'm afeard I shall be killed by 'em" thus his fear kept him in suspense, and he was incapable of acting for some time; at length he triumphed over his fears and he again visited his long-deserted habitation.

The first few days he passed were sometimes cheerful and sometimes sorrowful, for his apprehension would now and then obtrude itself upon him, and he would sink at the idea and shudder at the fate which hung suspended over him, but a little time expelled his apprehensions and he once more regained his former serenity, and he beheld his passing hours again with cheerfulness.

The general manner of accommodation which he employed for his most particular friends, were thus:---Three of them agreed to go and dine with him, it was a fine day, about the middle of last summer; at their arrival they could not see him, when, after they had examined his excavated dwelling, they called aloud for him; he was within hearing, and immediately answered, and appeared before them.

After they had passed their usual greetings, he made them sit down, and then brought forth a piece of boiled mutton, upon the lid of an old saucepan, quite rusted; he then got them some bread and beer, and then sat down likewise, recollecting that some salt and pepper was required, he put his hand into a private pocket, seemingly devoted for such-like uses, and drew forth a little of both, screwed up in tobacco papers, and from constant use had long lost their colour.

Though those curious culinary apparatuses, were so uninvitingly displayed, he sanctioned the goodness of the victuals by a hearty meal, urging them, by repeated solicitations, to do as he did.

Unwilling to offend, in appearance, their generous entertainer, they complied with his request, and found the repast extremely agreeable; the taste doing away the prejudice which the appearance of the things had raised, and which was greatly encouraged by the salubrity of that healthful place, which greatly increased their appetites.

Thus was the manner of entertainment to all his best friends; for if a lord had honored him with his company he would have been treated just

with the same simplicity, for those articles constituted his chief furniture.

The thoughts of his family, who went through life to his satisfaction, some being married and had children, encreased the pleasures of his days, and he was as much unmolested by the cares of this world as almost any person whatever could be, and his heart would expand at their presence with the pure glow of parental affection.

He had attained nearly the age of threescore and sixteen years, and was as perfect in his faculties as ever since the affecting derangement of his understanding, and which contributed to the serenity of his then present days.

There were several among his constant visitors, who had been in the habit of visiting him when boys, and had kept it on to his death; those he termed his visiting children, and some of them being married and with families, he would rejoice at their presence, and feel himself quite re-animated by them, he would very often have a few cakes for them, by which means he was a favorite of a new generation.

All those things would have softened his days had he been less devoted to them, exclusive of several other eccentric characters who often went

to see him, whose drolleries would have diverted a stoic, among them were two, a taylor and a cobbler, who being acquainted with his favorite liquor, always held a bottle of porter to him as the first salute, and which he as cordially emptied, then passed their friendly salutations and sat down together, he first producing the contents of his hermitage, adorned with his pot lid for the dish, and tobacco paper for his pepper and salt boxes ; *but now alas, we must bid farewell to all.*



THE FOLLOWING

ARE

THE MELANCHOLY PARTICULARS

OF

Poor Matthews' End.

ON TUESDAY, December 28, 1802, five boys taking their excursion, which they usually did in holiday time, in their progress they strayed towards Dulwich, and came to the Old Man's solitary habitation, but could not see him, at which they were something surprised, and began to search about the bushes and trees, induced by the curiosity common to such lads, and found the clothes of the poor old man, together with a coat, that did not belong to him, then calling out, "Here's some clothes," went to take them up, and, alas! underneath laid the mangled body of Old Matthews, the Norwood Hermit, his jaw bone was broke in two places, a very severe wound in his cheek, and his left wrist broke.

Whether it was the wounds he had received that occasioned his death, or whether it was owing to the coagulated blood, getting into his throat, and choaking him, we will not say, for which ever it may be, it certainly originated by the force used in getting him from the cave.

It seemed as though he had been forced out by the means of a hooked stick, which had been stuck in his cheek, and in that shocking manner dragged out, but whether he was pulled out entirely by it, or no, is unknown, as part of the hook was broke off, and found with the stick, which fitted exactly.

Being, as before observed, of that disposition common to Welchmen, hot and hasty, the parties by attacking him while in his cave, in their endeavors to force the enclosure thereof, must have of course alarmed him, and finding himself disagreeably assailed, was provoked by the intrusion, and endeavored to defend himself, which doubtless caused the cruel wretches to proceed to that extremity with him.

What they robbed him of is unknown, but very little it is conceived he could possess, through the liberality of his disposition, which could never behold unfeelingly the misery of any of his visitors.

The last time he was at Dulwich was to pay a butcher there, his little debt; he said he had come to pay him what he owed him, the butcher told him he did not owe him any thing, but he answered that he did, and that he would pay, and it was about five or six shillings: Well, says the butcher, I will look in my book, but he told him he would pay him; the butcher did not recollect it, but when he found he would pay for it, for he said that he had a memorandum of it, he asked him if he would have a piece of mutton, he said he could not afford it, the butcher then said, will you have it if I give it you, he said yes, accordingly he gave it him and he went away perfectly satisfied.

That was his last journey he made to *Dulwich*, or any place of signification, for soon after he received that cruelty which put the fatal period to his existence.



BRIEF SKETCH

OF

Matthews' Character.

IT would be useless to trace the history of his countrymen; who, in the annals of all ages were perspicuously observed for honor, honesty, learning, and valor.

That he possessed the two first is certain, and for the last we have not the least room to doubt but he possessed that also, for being in his disposition hasty and resolute, he would not tamely submit to the insults of any.

But for his learning he had nature to instruct him, who formed his breast of pure susceptibility, that, always yearned to soothe the hapless situation of his fellow creatures.

He was unfortunate, but like a Welshman, he would not die under the troubles that oppressed him, but soothed their powers by a ready acquiescence to the exertions of his fate.

He strictly observed that excellent commandment, as far as laid in his power, "To do unto all men as you would they should do unto you."



